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SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/UMB, DRL/AE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: Mud Wrestling Ends; Voting Proceeds
Mostly Smoothly

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REF: Chisinau 541

¶1. (SBU) Summary: After a mud-slinging polarized campaign, peaceful voting has begun on July 29. Procedures are in place, and nearly 2,000 polling stations (PEBs) are reporting high turnout. Problems are predominantly minor, such as errors on voting lists and occasional high-handed pronouncements by precinct chairpersons. OSCE/ODIHR will observe District Election Commissions throughout the night. The Central Election Commission (CEC) has promised, with little enthusiasm, to post PEB results at the DEC level, in order to permit cross-checking. The CEC reneged on the same promise on April 5. The CEC will begin providing preliminary election results at 23:30 and will continue to update the data throughout the night until the final election results are presented. End summary.

The Good News on Procedures

¶2. (SBU) On a pleasant, sunny summer day, voters showed up in high numbers, probably in an effort to get voting done before going to work. (Today's vote is the first taking place on a workday in Moldova's history.) At 9:45 A.M., the CEC reported a nationwide turnout of 10.7 percent, well on the way to meeting the recently reduced turnout requirement of one third of registered voters. As of 12:45, that number had risen to about thirty percent (29.99), turnout that was slightly higher than at the same time on April 5. As of 15:45, participation had reached 34.1 percent, enough for the elections to be considered valid. The Embassy fielded 12 teams of observers, who are reporting general compliance with the rules, active participation of political party PEB observers, as well as highly-interested and well-informed voters. In the majority of polling stations that Embassy observers visited, voting was taking place in an orderly fashion, without incident.

The Glitches

¶3. (SBU) As on April 5, there were numerous reports of technical violations and problems with the voter lists. Some voters, including Liberal

Democrat leader Vlad Filat, reported seeing the names of people, unknown to them, listed at their addresses. Others reported seeing the names of dead relatives and of friends and relatives no longer living in Moldova. At least one voter observed by an Embassy team was wrongly denied the right to vote because his ID card number was entered incorrectly. Another voter, also observed by an Embassy team, was correctly denied the right to vote, because his ID card had expired. Cases of husband and wife entering the voting booth together were observed. Some PEBs were better run than others, and one Embassy observer noted a PEB chairperson hiding ballots before the opening. PEBs where the room was too small were generally more chaotic, while there was a more orderly procedure in PEBs that had a larger space.

14. (SBU) One Embassy observer noted men in military uniforms picking up mobile ballot boxes, presumably for soldiers, and another observer noted psychiatric patients from a nearby hospital lined up to vote at a PEB. (Note: Military officers have no right to pick up mobile ballot boxes; it is the responsibility of PEB officials to transport the box to properly registered applicants who are incapacitated. It is illegal for persons of reduced mental capacity to vote. End note.) The most blatant case observed by an Embassy observer was of a PEB official who told an opposition party political observer to stay in his seat and not exercise his legal right to check voter lists and the work of PEB registrars.

SoQSo Far, So Good?

15. (SBU) Today's events so far recall the mostly placid events of April 5. The real difference this time is that all observers, whether local,

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international or local diplomatic, are aware that the most important part of the election is the counting and aggregating of figures at the DEC level. OSCE/ODIHR has told us that their observers will sequester themselves with the DECs throughout the wee hours to monitor the count. The CEC has also promised the international community that it will post all PEB results individually at the DEC level, to permit cross-checking. In contrast to April 5, IFES has installed software and fielded experts to allow this to happen in real time. IFES experts have told us, however, that the CEC made and reneged upon the same promise in April, and has been half-hearted in its July promises.

Troubles on the Line

16. (SBU) In the disputed left-bank village of Corjova (Voronin's birthplace), Transnistrian authorities and a crowd of some 200-300 protestors, prevented voting from taking place. The crowd including Cossacks, plainclothes "irregulars" and other nationalists, began to assemble before 6:00 A.M. in order to prevent the polling station from opening. Embassy observers witnessed busloads of rough-looking young men arriving at around 6:20 A.M. Organizers distributed red and green Transnistrian armbands to the participants. At 7:00 A.M. official speeches at the Transnistrian demonstration began,

and the voting urn and polling booth were carried out of the building. Demonstrators had banners with slogans including "Corjova is Transnistrian Territory" and "No Illegal Elections." At 10:00 A.M., after a special meeting, the Central Election Committee determined that elections could not be held in Corjova, pronounced the station closed, and ruled that Corjova residents could vote in either Cocieri or Ustia, two nearby villages. The scenario unfolded exactly as it had on April 5, with the same cast of characters present; Moldovan election officials understood that they could not penetrate the crowd and made no attempt to do so, hence the event remained peaceful and there were no violent clashes.

Comment:

17. (SBU) The day's events are not looking too bad, all things considered. What happens in the night (and what we and others will be allowed to see in the night) will be crucial. At this point we cannot gauge what will happen in the post-elections environment, as it will depend upon the extent to which the population accepts the announced results or believes there was serious falsification. Polling stations will close at 21:00 local time. The CEC will then begin providing preliminary election results at 23:30 and will continue to update the data throughout the night until the final election results are presented. The real political drama will begin only after the voting results are known.

CHAUDHRY